

Learning about Legislation #26: Senate Rule XIV

The Senate rules provide a means for placing an order directly onto the Senate calendar, bypassing committee review and reporting. This process is described in [Rule XIV, section 4](#):

Every bill and joint resolution reported from a committee, not having previously been read, shall be read once, and twice, if not objected to, on the same day, and placed on the Calendar in the order in which the same may be reported; and every bill and joint resolution introduced on leave, and every bill and joint resolution of the House of Representatives which shall have received a first and second reading without being referred to a committee, shall, if objection be made to further proceeding thereon, be placed on the Calendar.

The Congressional Research Service further clarifies this process in a [white paper](#), explaining that “...Although placing a bill or joint resolution directly on the calendar does not guarantee that the full Senate will ever consider it, the measure is available for floor consideration.”

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) invoked Senate Rule XIV this week to get the Senate to consider a bill that would change the way the Congress handles sexual harassment complaints. That bill passed the House 100 days ago, but has yet to receive consideration at the Senate. Her full comments in relation to the invocation of Senate Rule XIV are included below. Please note that when Sen. Gillibrand “objects”, she is objecting to the bill being sent to committee and is directing it, instead, to be placed on the calendar of the main body of the Senate.

I now ask for a second reading and, in order to place the bill on the calendar under Rule XIV, I object.

<chair’s response - Objection having been heard, the bill will be read for the second time on the next legislative day.>

Madam President, one hundred days ago, the House of Representatives voted unanimously to pass the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 Reform Act. The current system is broken. It makes no sense that a staffer who is sexually harassed or discriminated against has to possibly wait months for mediation, for counseling, for cooling off, before she or he is able to even file a claim.

And this bill would make sure that when a Member of Congress sexually harasses or discriminates against someone on their staff, the taxpayers are not left holding the bag. That is what this bill does. There is no reasonable excuse to stand in its way.

Your constituents do not deserve to have their hard-earned tax dollars paying for these settlements.

What they deserve, is a vote on this reform now. But what have we seen since the House acted? Nothing but politics as usual, despite having bipartisan support on this issue.

And I want to thank my colleagues, the Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, Senator Klobuchar, and Senator Murray, for their leadership and their efforts to pass this bill here in the Senate. They have been great partners in trying to move this forward.

It’s long past time for us to act! We need to pass this bill, and send it to the President’s desk so he can sign it into law.

Because we've all seen very clearly over the last year that sexual harassment and discrimination in workplaces are far more pervasive than previously realized. We've all witnessed harassment and discrimination. We've all seen that it can happen across society – from factories and restaurants, to Hollywood and the halls of Congress, right here in this building.

But the difference is, while practically every other industry in the country seems to be taking this problem more seriously now, and at least making an effort to change their workplace policies, Congress is dragging its feet. Once again, a problem is staring us in the face, and we are looking the other way.

Enough is enough. We have to do better. We have waited 100 days, and we are not waiting any longer. So I urge my colleagues to do the right thing, right now, and support this bill to finally fix the broken system in Congress that is failing on sexual harassment.

This one is as easy as it gets. So let's have a vote and pass it.

I yield the floor.

If you would like to watch Sen. Gillibrand invoke Senate Rule XIV, it is available on [YouTube](#).